

MAYOR OF LONDON

Valerie Shawcross AM
Chair of the Transport Committee
London Assembly
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

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Date: 12 FEB 2014

Dear Val

London Assembly Transport Committee report - "Bus services in London"

Please find attached Transport for London's initial responses to the nine recommendations in the "Bus services in London" report, as promised in my letter of 21 January.

As indicated in the response, Leon Daniels and senior staff are attending the committee's seminar on 19 February and would also be happy to meet for an informal discussion prior to submitting the full response.

Yours ever,



Boris Johnson
Mayor of London.

Enc.

TRANSPORT FOR LONDON

London Assembly Transport Committee report - "Bus services in London": Initial response to the nine recommendations

Introduction

The bus network has an important role in supporting London's continued economic and social development. All transport services and operations face challenges as London continues to grow and thrive. We are very much aware that continuous improvement is necessary and we thank the committee for their examination of the best ways to keep London's network "world-class". This document provides brief initial responses to the recommendations prior to a full report in March.

In preparing that report we will be taking account of comments and suggestions made at the seminar which the committee is organising for 19 February. Additionally, if the committee would find it useful, we will be most happy to make arrangements for an informal discussion between members and senior Surface Transport staff prior to completing our response.

Recommendation 1

By March 2014 the Mayor and TfL should demonstrate to Londoners how they are meeting the challenge of rising demand for bus travel by publishing a long-term strategy for the development of the bus network. This strategy should include a mechanism whereby TfL will monitor and respond to bus passengers' reports of overcrowding e.g. via Twitter and publish its findings and actions from this monitoring.

Initial TfL Response

The new TfL Business Plan (published in December 2013) sets out our current forecasts for growth in bus demand and service levels over the next seven years, as well as our intention to maintain excellent reliability. We recognise the benefits of providing a more detailed expression of the strategy and how the bus network will continue to support London's growth and will do so in our March report. As mentioned above, this will take full account of comments at the forthcoming seminar and, if convenient for members, at the informal discussion.

Our initial response to the second part of this recommendation (monitoring of passenger reports) is covered below under Recommendation 2.

Recommendation 2

By March 2014 the Mayor and TfL should demonstrate to Londoners that they are monitoring and addressing the busyness of buses by devising a performance measure for all bus routes that captures how many people cannot board a bus because it is too full and cannot get a seat once on board in peak times. They should set annual targets for performance against this measure and report on progress against these targets twice a year.

Initial TfL response

It is very much the case that TfL is monitoring and addressing the busyness of buses. As described in our initial submission, we regularly monitor demand in a variety of ways, including surveys (around 7000 in the last three years alone), smartcard data, reviews of customer and stakeholder correspondence. Although complaints about overcrowding typically comprise fewer than 5% of the total comments we receive about buses, we take all such complaints seriously and address them in a variety of ways including changes to frequencies and bus sizes as well as measures to improve reliability.

Measures of bus demand at network level are published alongside other key performance indicators in our annual "Travel in London" report and elsewhere, including occupancy rates.

This gives useful trend information for the network. Following the committee's report we will now publish annually the number of passenger journeys and the level of bus-km operated on each route.

Providing the much more detailed measure of busyness as set out in the recommendation would be challenging due to the scale and complexity of bus demand and the kinds of data that we would be required to collect. Nonetheless we are reviewing how we might provide further information, including consideration of what may be possible with innovative technology such as smartcard data, and good practice in other cities worldwide. We can update further on our thinking in this area if we meet and will provide a fuller response to this recommendation in March.

We are also currently investigating how social media data can be used for monitoring accessibility issues on the network. We will consider whether the same techniques could be used in respect of other bus service issues, including crowding.

Recommendation 3

By March 2014 the Mayor and TfL should devise and publish a programme of cross-boundary bus service reviews and set out for consultation, proposals for more orbital and express bus routes.

Initial TfL response

Bus services in London are already reviewed on a structured basis. Current examples include the impact on the network of Crossrail, a Bexley Riverside study, with Bexley Council, a land-use / bus network review, with Greenwich Council, a study in south Newham tied into a local multi-modal infrastructure review and a review of services in New Addington. There are also many smaller-scale items ranging from large planning applications to "healthchecks" of performance on individual routes.

We recognise the need to develop the visibility of the process, including how areas of study are prioritised, how inputs are gathered, and engagement generally. We have started examining options for this in conjunction with London Councils and other partners and will update the committee on progress in March.

Regarding orbital and express services, we will continue to publish specific bus route or route-type proposals as and when our ongoing review process demonstrates they are necessary. Express routes will continue to play a part in the mix of service provision. We will describe the context and outlook for orbital and express provision in our March report.

Recommendation 4

By March 2014 the Mayor and TfL should devise and publish details of a new approach to bus service consultation to provide for boroughs and Londoners to have a more informed say on bus services. This should include provision for targeted consultation with bus passengers who use Oyster cards via email and for the boroughs and bus users to comment on TfL's guidelines for planning bus services.

Initial TfL response

The consultation process has been developed in recent years. A major change is that detailed descriptions of all proposals for significant changes to services are now posted for comment on TfL's consultation website, for review before any final decisions are made.

We recognise the need for continuous development of our engagement and consultation processes. Emerging initiatives include early engagement meetings with key stakeholders, to assist with informed comment, joint consideration with boroughs of additional formats for engagement, such as 'drop-in' sessions and emails to registered Oyster card users about consultations which may be of interest

We will review all potential enhancements in the light of the committee's recommendations, including those on the planning guidelines and provide a report to the committee in March.

Recommendation 5

By March 2014 the Mayor and TfL should report on their work with NHS providers including through the London Health Board to plan for good public transport access at each London hospital and major health centre now and after NHS reconfigurations.

Initial TfL response

Good access to hospitals and healthcare is an important element of bus network development and London hospitals generally have extensive bus connections.

We are working with NHS providers across London to understand how emerging changes in healthcare provision could change travel demand and will update the committee in March.

Recommendation 6

In its next published business plan, TfL should demonstrate to Londoners the cost effectiveness of the bus service by showing the gross cost effectiveness and financial impact of concessionary fares for all modes of service.

Initial TfL response

We are reviewing how best to do this and will provide details for the committee in March.

Recommendation 7

By March 2014 the Mayor and TfL should report on how they will use the next generation of Oyster cards to develop a passenger focused ticketing system that provides for new ticketing and fares options including 'early bird' fares, part-time travel cards and 'one hour' bus tickets, and funding options for these new products.

Initial TfL response

Some of the new ticketing options set out in the report, such as a 'one hour' bus ticket have been reviewed relatively recently. We continue to believe that, in current circumstances, this particular product is not the right thing to provide at present given the extra complexity and the significant additional costs.

However, the introduction of contactless bank card payments not only gives customers extra flexibility but also provides the opportunity for development of further new ticketing products whereas the original Oyster card system has a number of operational constraints. The Mayor has therefore asked us to work on ticketing products which specifically address the needs of part-time workers, asking them to balance the desire of all Londoners to have a simple and cost-effective ticketing system with the needs of part-time workers.

We will update the committee on progress with this work in March and would be very happy to discuss this further with committee members.

Recommendation 8

By March 2014, the Mayor and TfL should publish details on how they are improving bus journey reliability. This may mean more bus priority measures and tackling the 30 traffic pinch points on the road network that affect 250 bus routes.

Initial TfL response

The Mayor's Roads Task Force examined the significant and growing pressures on roadspace and commended bus services as an important element of the response. We welcome the committee's support for bus priority. The TfL Business Plan has allocated £200m over the next nine years for the development and implementation of schemes to give buses new priority at pinch points and along new high-quality bus priority corridors serving key growth areas. With around 80% of bus services running on borough-controlled roads, TfL staff will work with borough officers to ensure that this is spent in the most cost-effective way. We will supply details of progress with this work in March.

Recommendation 9

By March 2014, the Mayor and TfL should publish the schedule for the roll-out of more environmentally friendly bus vehicles including electric bus vehicles to help reduce air pollution.

Initial TfL response

Further enhancements to the environmental performance of the bus fleet are planned. Already the cleanest diesel fleet in Europe, London now has over 600 hybrid buses in service and this will rise to 1700 by 2016. We recently announced trials of electric buses during 2014. In addition by 2015 the whole of the London bus fleet will meet the Euro IV emissions standard for PM and NOx. A detailed update on this work will be supplied in March